

## **Frequently Asked Questions – Operation and Maintenance (O&M) portal (My Health Department) for Environmental Health Database**

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) replaced its legacy environmental health data management system, the Virginia Environmental Information System (VENIS). VENIS, implemented in 2003, is an IBM Domino based product, but the technology is outdated and the functionality no longer supports the needs and standards of VDH. VDH signed a contract with HealthSpace to develop and implement a new cloud based enterprise system, Environmental Health Database (EHD), for internal use that allows, among many other features, simultaneous data input from all users in multiple jurisdictions to create permits, inspection reports, invoices, receipts, attach documents, and allow search and export of selected data. Nearly every program administered by VDH through the Office of Environmental Health Services will utilize EHD. Receiving O&M report submissions via an external facing portal is one just of the many features of this internal system. On May 5, 2020, VDH hosted a web-based training event for use of the new O&M report submission portal. This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) documents addresses questions received during and immediately after the training.

Q: The new O&M portal is user unfriendly and will make it impossible to keep track of multiple reports.

A: We are collaboratively working to resolve these issues. HealthSpace (HS) attended the training session. Since the launch we met with HS to reiterate your concerns and are developing the next version of the O&M portal.

Q: For starters, we must have: 1) ability to save and print reports; 2) make user interface better; 3) rearrange the order of data entry fields; 4) allow attaching lab reports; 5) shopping cart feature.

A: We are working with HS to develop many of these features. However, it is important to note that 1) due to the differences between technology of the VENIS portal and the new O&M portal, some features/functionality may not be developed or be exactly the same as the VENIS portal; and 2) Current technological solutions likely will not address all user requests.

Q: The new O&M portal does not have database capabilities.

A: Correct; nor was it intended to have such capability. Due to vast and frequent changes in technology and business needs, portals and databases are defined in many ways. For the purposes of this FAQ these terms are explained as below: A portal is a web-based platform that can be accessed via unique user credentials that collects information from different users into a single user interface, by displaying selected content to the user. A database is an organized collection of structured and interconnected information, or data, controlled by a database management system with the ability to store, update and retrieve data. The new O&M portal is linked to the VDH internal database to allow for O&M data input, but the O&M portal itself is not a database. Consistent with the VENIS portal, the new O&M portal is only designed to function as a data entry and report submission tool.

Q: Why were operators not involved in the initial design of the new portal?

A: There is little change in the list of data entry fields between the VENIS portal and the new O&M portal. Due in part to the complexity of the new O&M portal and associated VDH internal database,

the design and testing required close coordination of external facing and internal facing functionalities, resulting in a fluctuating and long-term time commitment. During the design and development stages, VDH worked to ensure operators were not tasked with volunteer hours as testers and/or potentially lose moneys during testing as report submission functionality may not be fully developed. VDH chose to provide new O&M report submission capabilities linked to the VDH internal database to the operators as quickly as possible and then gather user feedback from as many users as possible at one time. We understand this process is unusual and resulted in frustration for first time users. In the future, an option would be to work with selected operators who may participate in testing the updated O&M portal.

Q: We use Online RME/Carmody. When and how can we submit the O&M reports to VDH?

A: We are working with these two companies who confirmed they have capability to hold the reports in their respective data repository systems for now. During this transition period, users of these two data systems are not expected to complete double data entry or be penalized for failing to submit timely O&M reports to VDH. Further, VDH is also working with these two companies to develop an interface between those systems and the new O&M portal. As soon as the next version of the new O&M portal is released, we will continue to develop these interfaces.

Q: How will the enforcement action against the home owners be handled during this transition?

A: VDH does not contemplate sending enforcement letters to homeowners at this time. Our focus is ensuring the interface between Carmody and Online RME is developed; completing as many changes as the system allows based on user feedback; and pushing out revisions to the users.

Q: Who should I contact for more information about the new O&M portal?

A: Please send all your questions and feedback to [ehdministrators@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:ehdministrators@vdh.virginia.gov) mailbox. This is a dedicated mailbox for communication with internal and external users of VDH database and O&M portal, including the operators.

Q: How will I know if VDH has released any new information about O&M portal?

A: Please check one of the two VDH websites (<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/environmental-health/onsite-sewage-water-services-updated/> or <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/environmental-health/information-for-onsite-system-service-providers/>) to get the most recent copy of the FAQs and O&M portal users resources.